

CHAIRMANS REPORT FOR MUWAGA AGM – 24 MAY 2023

- This year MUWAGA is 38 years old.
- The Association is in good health (well I hope so) the ups and downs of the Covid lockdown are behind us and we hope it stays that way. I am grateful to our loyal members for sticking with us and the Committee who have seen us through the thick and thin of the last few years.
- **Matters Arising from the 2022 AGM**
 - Subscriptions will remain at £6. Our accounts are stable we will not consider raising subs until we must, but speakers' costs are going up and no doubt this will be reflected in their charges. We will have to see how it goes. I am pleased to report that membership stands at a healthy 143 members.
 - We intend to continue to use Kings Seeds (12years now) because they provide such a good service and a valuable discount.
 - I offer my thanks to Simon Williamson who took on the running of the seed order from David and Joanna Van de Pol last year and did an excellent job and I am pleased to say Simon is willing to carry on. Relief!! As before Simon will only order catalogues for regular seed order users or new ones who let him know they want one. The Kings catalogue is also available on-line through a link on the MUWAGA website so, if possible, we would like you to use that instead of a paper copy.
 - We intend to continue using e-mail for most communication so having your e-mail address makes keeping you up to date simple. We continue to safeguard your contact details which we are committed to continue to do. E-mail is such a useful medium to keep you abreast of events and to let you know of any offers of items that members want to offer for sale or for free. We do encourage all members to let us have their contact e-mail address to make this as easy as possible.
 - We have a well-developed and user-friendly website which increasingly will be a main avenue for keeping you up to speed and providing useful articles and resumes of speaker evenings. David Betterton has done an excellent job and I would like to take the opportunity to say thank you for the work he puts in in keeping it all current and attractive.

- **MUWAGA Report**

This year marks the 38th anniversary of the Association. We are now firmly back to physical meetings and speaker evenings in person and I, for one, am delighted that we can get together and socialise as before. Zoom is a great facility, and we would still use it as a last resort but I hope it will not be necessary.

- I do not intend to give a resume of the talks and events of the last year, primarily to avoid boring you and because all the details are on the website and if you are interested you can find it all there. Sue Cunningham has said she will continue to manage the speaker programme and I am certainly grateful for the work she puts in on it. What has been particularly encouraging for the Committee is that we have had very good attendances and we hope members have enjoyed the talks and the range of topics that were presented. Hopefully, this means we are doing something right.
- The next speaker programme will start in September as usual. Details are in your new membership cards and on the website. The website is also a place where any short notice changes will be announced.
- As I mentioned previously, the best way to stay informed is to look at the MUWAGA website (www.MUWAGA.com). We will strive to make sure it stays current and accurate.

I take this opportunity to register my thanks to all the Committee and other members who give their time and considerable effort to make things happen. You all have my heartfelt thanks. The most visible part is the speaker evenings and events like the Cheese and Wine, but Committee members maintain finances, memberships and keep the Chairman in order. Also, non-committee members help in many ways, particularly with the seed order and setting out and putting away and so on. Even so, we need new committee members to keep things running. I will address this later.

- **Financial Report**

Our finances remain stable, with a small increase in the account over the last year. We have circulated the accounts as at 31 April with a balance of just under £3600. Our costs have increased over the last year, but we believe the current subscription will be sufficient and we hope there will not be any need to increase subscriptions for a good while

We will seek a proposer and seconder to approve the accounts at the AGM

- **Committee**

- I am pleased to let you know that all the current committee members have agreed to serve another year. I am grateful to have such a supportive and hard-working committee and at the AGM I will seek a proposer and seconder to agree to the existing committee members serving another term. However, 1 committee member has had to resign during the year and others while still serving want to step back.
- This means that for now Joanna Van de Poll continues to fill the role of Secretary (Di Fletcher filled this role for 20 years but fortunately Di remains a committee member). We are seeking someone else to take on this role. As I mentioned earlier, Sue Cunningham has agreed to continue booking and managing the speaker programme.
- We no longer run a Show since no one has stepped forward to run it, but we have replaced this with a Summer Event and this year Sandy Bradshaw has very kindly offered to host this at her house. It is currently planned to be held on 29 July. In addition, Craig Blackwell, who gave us a fascinating talk on wildflowers in the Cotswolds, has agreed to lead a wildflower walk at Chipping Norton on 18 June. Details of both events will be published closer to the time. Gerald Stratford is also opening his garden to members on 16 July so there is plenty going on.
- Some members have expressed disappointment that the Show has been discontinued so, if you want one, we need people to take on the arrangements. Simon Williamson continues to run the seed order – he is not a committee member and this illustrates that if people are happy to run specific activities on behalf of the Association they do not necessarily need to be on the committee.
- We are, however, short of committee members and do not have any co-opted members. It is important that we do recruit new members to help inject new ideas and keep us all on our toes. I am pleased to tell you that Jackie Birch has expressed an interest in joining the committee and we hope she finds us acceptable. However, if anyone is interested in giving it a go, without obligation, why not see what it entails and, if you like it. You will be very welcome, and it is in no way intimidating.

- Lastly, I find I have been Chairman for 17 years, it is too long, and I am stepping down after this meeting. We have not found anyone who is willing to take on the role. I can state, with confidence, that it is not particularly onerous especially since we have such a supportive and loyal committee. I am sure the committee note how easy my role is and my lack of effort! So, for the moment MUWAGA will not have a Chair although with your agreement I will continue to serve on the committee. We will need to consider how to operate with this arrangement.

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM which will be followed by, our now traditional, Cheese, Wine and Pate evening which is free to members.

Tony Lewis